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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 009029

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [IN](#) [BT](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: RGOB: NEED CATEGORY 1 AND 4 REPATRIATION AGREEMENT
IN WRITING

REF: A. KATHMANDU 2568

[B](#). NEW DELHI 8893

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Bhutan is ready to accept category 1 and 4 refugees from the Khudunabari camp, but needs Nepal to agree to the proposal in writing, which Nepal seems unwilling to do, Bhutanese Ambassador Tshering stated in a December 1 meeting with PolCouns and PolOff. The Ambassador reported that Bhutanese FM Wangchuk gave Nepalese FM Pandey the conditions for return during the November 12-13 SAARC summit, and that a joint delivery of these points to the refugees must precede any repatriation. He reiterated Thimphu's position that issues with Khudunabari camp should be finalized before restarting joint verification of the remaining camps and that Thimphu does not see a role for international monitors during resettlement efforts. The RGOB is willing to work with whichever group is in power in Kathmandu, whether it is the King or the political parties in order to move the resettlement process forward, but remains very concerned about Maoist infiltration into the camps, Tshering reported. Tshering passed us an article from "The

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Telegraph" of Calcutta reporting the arrest of a Bhutanese refugee in the Indian town of Kurseong for having Maoist links, noting Bhutanese concerns of a nexus between camp residents and Maoist groups. He stated that he had no information about a report from the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) concerning the arrest of four refugees for distributing pamphlets in the southern Bhutanese town of Phuntsholing. Separately, the Ambassador revealed the King began his "road show" to discuss the new constitution with the people and has completed two of Bhutan's 20 districts. End Summary.

Tshering: "Nepal Has Cold Feet"

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[1](#)2. (C) Nepalese FM Pandey experienced a case of "cold feet" in Dhaka and was unwilling to follow through on the agreement made between Bhutan and Nepal during the September 2005 UNGA for the immediate repatriation of category 1 and 4 refugees from the Khudunabari camp, Tshering remarked. He suggested that Nepal's unwillingness to put the agreement in writing raises doubts about the government's sincerity, and that relying solely on a verbal agreement could lead to further confusion, especially if there is a change of regime in Kathmandu. It is important to solidify the agreement in writing so we can move forward, Tshering asserted. He reiterated the RGOB position that verification and repatriation of Khudunabari should be completed before starting work on other camps.

First Deliver Terms and Conditions of Return

[1](#)3. (C) Tshering commented that Bhutan and Nepal must jointly deliver the terms and conditions for return to the camp residents before any voluntary repatriation can take place. We must provide these conditions, developed under the laws of each country, to the camp residents so they can make an educated decision as to what they would like to do, Tshering said. He noted that the RGOB had provided the GON with a copy of these terms and conditions. Tshering also indicated that the RGOB does not want international monitors to oversee resettlement efforts in Bhutan, and "only after the resettlement occurs, and a need arises, would such assistance be requested." Tshering signaled Bhutan would be able to move forward on the repatriation shortly after the conditions were shared with the refugees.

Willing to Work With Either the King or Political Parties

[1](#)4. (C) Noting that Bhutan is in a "strange situation," having to deal with an unstable regime in which the political parties have stated (sic) they would disavow any agreements made by the King, Tshering asserted that Bhutan would "not be deterred." He said the RGOB would work with either group to resolve the refugee issue and that the main concern is finding a durable and lasting solution. PolCouns remarked that the USG was pleased to hear that the political turmoil

in Nepal had not stopped Bhutan's willingness to move forward.

Maoists, Maoists Everywhere!

15. (C) Passing us a November 5 article from "The Telegraph" out of Calcutta reporting on the arrest of a camp resident in the Indian town of Kurseong (30 kilometers from Darjeeling) for having ties to the Maoists, Tshering reiterated Bhutanese concerns that Maoists had infiltrated the camps, and that they were developing ties with other militant/terrorist groups in the region. He said, "we are a little nervous, and can ill afford the nexus of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Bodos and the Maoists, sneaking into Bhutan, especially during a time of democratic change." However, he indicated that these fear would not prevent the repatriation of category 1 and 4 refugees under the latest agreement, or a finding broader solution to the problem.

Arrest of Pamphleteers in Phuntsholing

16. (C) PolCouns raised concern about the reported arrest of four refugees in the southern Bhutanese town of Phuntsholing for distributing pamphlets calling for the repatriation of the refugee population. Tshering stated that he had not heard about the HUROB report. (Note: HUROB sent us an email on November 28 claiming that four refugees were arrested that day by the Royal Bhutanese Army and their whereabouts are unknown. End Note.) Tshering discounted the accusation, stating that there are "umpteens numbers of these groups" in Nepal, many linked to the Maoists, and they often make unsubstantiated allegations.

A Democratic King Begins Educational Tour

17. (U) In order to inform the Bhutanese populace about democracy and the draft constitution, Tshering told us that King Wangchuck has begun his educational "road show" around the country and has completed audiences in two of Bhutan's 20 districts. Tshering was noncommittal as to when he thinks the referendum on the constitution would take place.
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